

## **Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (APP I): A Program of Research**

**Methodology:** The Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (APP) protocol was designed to help reduce the high incidence of low birth weight babies and infant mortality in DC by reducing unintended pregnancies among adolescents. The project's primary goal was to reduce adolescent pregnancies by encouraging teens to delay the onset of initiation of sexual intercourse and by facilitating access to reproductive and general health services. The target population was seventh grade students from six DC area junior high schools, consisting of predominantly African-American and Latino youth aged 12 to 14. The six junior high schools selected for the study were matched into three pairs based on school size, location, and ethnic demographics. Within each pair, schools were randomized to either intervention or control conditions.

The intervention consisted of both educational and service components that included the following: (1) placement of facilitators—trained master's-level professionals—who worked with the seventh grade students and coordinated the components of the program; (2) a preparatory reproductive health curriculum and the abstinence-based curriculum, *Postponing Sexual Involvement*, taught to the seventh grade students by trained high school peer leaders; (3) a risk assessment and screening process designed to identify the health care needs of the students and to increase access to general and reproductive health services; and (4) booster activities, conducted during the fall of the eighth grade school year, which were designed to reinforce key program messages among students, school staff, and parents.

A baseline self-report assessment of demographic and other related information, sexual behavior and attitudes, and health care service utilization was conducted at the six schools during the winter of 1996, prior to all intervention activities. The intervention was implemented at the three intervention schools during the winter/spring of 1996. Following the intervention, students were resurveyed at the end of the 1996 school year. A total of 523 students participated in the baseline survey administration, and a total of 503 students participated in the first follow-up survey administration. No linkage of individual identity was made; students were followed as a group over time. A second and a third follow-up survey were conducted the following year when the students were in the eighth grade. A total of 564 students completed the second survey and a total of 510 students completed the third follow-up survey.

**Results:** At baseline, 44 percent of the seventh grade males and 81 percent of the seventh grade females reported being virgins. At the end of the seventh grade (first follow-up), after controlling for baseline study group differences, females in the intervention group were more likely to report virginity, self-efficacy to refuse sex with a boyfriend, and the intention to avoid sexual involvement during the following 6 months. At the end of the eighth grade, significantly more intervention- than control-group females reported virginity, birth control use at last intercourse (for nonvirgins), and knowledge of adolescent reproductive health and confidentiality rights. No changes in virginity, self-efficacy to refuse sex, or sexual intent for the next 6 months were observed among male participants at any time during the study. However, on all three follow-up

surveys, intervention-group males scored significantly higher than their control-group counterparts in knowledge of birth control method efficacy. No change in attitudes toward abstinence was observed for either gender at any follow-up point.